

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 00901

DEPT. PASS JUSTICE FOR THE ATTORNEY GENERAL; WHITE HOUSE
SITUATION ROOM FOR PETER BOURNE; DEA FOR THE ADMINISTRATOR

EO 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: SNAR, MX
SUBJECT: NARCOTICS - GOM REQUESTS ELIMINATION OF DEA
SPOTTERS

REF: MEXICO 00258

1. SUMMARY: ON JANUARY 13 ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE REQUESTED THAT EMBASSY REDUCE BY HALF THE DEA TDY PERSONNEL SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE JANUARY 15 TO SUPPORT GOM ERADICATION PROGRAM, AND ADDED THAT THIS SMALLER NUMBER WOULD BE EXPECTED TO LEAVE FOLLOWING A THREE WEEK, COUNTRY-WIDE VISUAL RECONNAISSANCE EFFORT. AMBASSADOR SPOKE WITH ATTORNEY GENERAL (AG) FLORES, NOTED THAT HIS DEPUTY HAD APPROVED PLAN AS PROPOSED, AND REQUESTED THAT ATTORNEY GENERAL PERMIT PROGRAM TO PROCEED AS SCHEDULED UNTIL ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL VISITS MEXICO, AT WHICH TIME ATTORNEYS GENERAL COULD DISCUSS PROBLEM. FLORES AGREED TO DEFER CHANGES UNTIL HE CAN DISCUSS SITUATION WITH ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL. END SUMMARY.

2. REFTEL REPORTED THAT PLANNED DEA SUPPORT OF GOM
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ERADICATION PROGRAM FACED NO OBJECTIONS FROM ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE. THE DISCUSSION UPON WHICH THIS APPROVAL WAS BASED WAS FORMALIZED IN AN EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN THE EMBASSY AND DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL ALBALEYVA ON JANUARY 10 AND 11.

3. ON JANUARY 13 ACTING NARCOTICS ATTACHE SAUCEDO MET

WITH THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S EXECUTIVE OFFICER, FERNANDO BAEZA, AT LATTER'S REQUEST. BAEZA OPENED CONVERSATION BY BRIEFING SAUCEDO ON ATTORNEY GENERAL'S BELIEF THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO CURTAIL U.S. PARTICIPATION IN THE ERADICATION CAMPAIGN. HE STATED THAT GOM WAS PLANNING A COUNTRY-WIDE RECONNAISSANCE EFFORT BEGINNING JANUARY 20. APPROXIMATELY ONE-HALF OF THE TDY PERSONNEL PLANNED BY DEA WOULD BE PERMITTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RECON ACTIVITY, WHICH WOULD LAST APPROXIMATELY THREE WEEKS, FOLLOWING WHICH THEY WOULD BE EXPECTED TO LEAVE MEXICO.

4. ACCORDING TO BAEZA, EVEN THIS PARTICIPATION WOULD REQUIRE THAT THE AG'S OFFICE FOREGO MILITARY PARTICIPATION IN THE RECON ACTIVITY SINCE ONLY SO MANY AIRCRAFT SEATS WERE AVAILABLE. HE ADDED THAT THE ATTORNEY GENERAL IS OF THE OPINION THAT DEA PARTICIPATION SERVES NO PURPOSE SINCE THE TDY PERSONNEL KNOW LESS ABOUT POPPY CHARACTERISTICS THAN MEXICAN PERSONNEL, THEY HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON MEXICAN EMPLOYEES WHO FEEL THAT THE ATTORNEY GENERAL IS USING AMERICANS AS WATCHDOGS, THEY CONSTITUTE A POLITICAL LIABILITY, AND THAT THE PRESENCE OF FOREIGN PARTICIPANTS OFFENDS THE EXTREME SENSITIVITY OF THE MEXICAN MILITARY. BAEZA OPINED THAT THE GOOD WILL AND WHOLEHEARTED PARTICIPATION OF THE MILITARY IS MUCH MORE ESSENTIAL THAN THE PARTICIPATION OF DEA PERSONNEL. USG COOPERATION, BAEZA ADDED, SHOULD BE IN CONFIDENTIAL

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AREAS IN WHICH THE GOM IS NOT SELF-SUFFICIENT, AS HE BELIEVES IT IS IN SPOTTING AND VERIFICATION.

5. IN VIEW OF BAEZA'S REMARKS, AMBASSADOR PERSONALLY SPOKE WITH FLORES AFTERNOON OF JANUARY 13. HE NOTED THAT TIMING OF DECISION WAS MOST UNFORTUNATE AS AT THAT MOMENT THE PERSONNEL INVOLVED WERE EN ROUTE TO MEXICO. NOTING THAT ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL IS SCHEDULED TO VISIT MEXICO IN LESS THAN THREE WEEKS, AMBASSADOR REQUESTED FLORES TO PERMIT PARTICIPATION TO PROCEED AS SCHEDULED AND SUGGESTED THAT THE TWO ATTORNEYS GENERAL COULD BEST DISCUSS THIS ISSUE AT THAT TIME. FLORES AGREED. PERSONNEL HAVE SINCE ARRIVED AND ARE NOW BEING DEPLOYED TO PARTICIPATE IN COUNTRY-WIDE RECONNAISSANCE SWEEP.

6. EMBASSY COMMENTS AND ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS OPEN TO US WILL FOLLOW IN SEPARATE MESSAGES. LUCEY

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